



**WOMEN'S  
ADVANCEMENT  
& ADVOCACY**



# ACTIVITIES AND RECOMENDATIONS REPORT

*To John C. Carney, Governor, State of  
Delaware, The Delaware General Assembly*

*&*

*Amy Bonner, Secretary, Delaware  
Department of Human Resources*



**WOMEN'S  
ADVANCEMENT  
& ADVOCACY**

DELAWARE WOMEN'S  
WORKFORCE COUNCIL

DELAWARE WOMEN'S  
COMMISSION

*Hall of Fame*  
OF DELAWARE WOMEN

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Background &amp; Mission</b>	<b>3</b>
OWAA'S MISSION	4
POLICY	7
EVENTS	10
RESEARCH AND REPORTS	14
PUBLIC OUTREACH	16
 <b>Delaware Commission for Women</b>	 <b>19</b>
DELAWARE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN MEMBERS	20
 <b>Delaware Women's Workforce Council</b>	 <b>23</b>
DELAWARE WOMENS WORKFORCE COUNCIL MEMBERS	24
 <b>Hall Of Fame Of Delaware Women</b>	 <b>26</b>
HALL OF FAME COMMITTEE MEMBERS	27
HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES	28
 <b>Recommendations For The 151<sup>st</sup> General Assembly</b>	 <b>29</b>

## THE OFFICE OF WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT AND ADVOCACY

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# BACKGROUND & MISSION



**2020**

## Activities & Recommendations Report





*The Office of Women's Advancement & Advocacy (OWAA) was launched in fall of 2017 as the result of House Bill (HB) 4 of the 149th General Assembly. The bill gave OWAA the express purpose of promoting the equality and equity of women in all areas of society across the state of Delaware. In order to accomplish this goal, OWAA was charged with the following responsibilities:*



- » Fostering collaborations among governmental entities, individuals, organizations, businesses and institutions toward the elimination of gender-based bias and discrimination.
- » Referring complaints and inquiries to the appropriate state departments, agencies or community organizations.
- » Gathering and sharing information on the status of women, including conducting research projects to report on the status of women in Delaware.
- » Advising executive and legislative bodies on the effect of proposed legislation on women through reports, statistics and testimony.
- » Providing recommendations regarding the implementation of any gender-based legislation or policy.
- » Making specific legislative proposals relating to the removal of discriminatory laws and practices.
- » Producing and distributing educational and informative media materials.
- » Performing other functions and duties as imposed by law or as assigned to it by the Governor, the Secretary of the DHR or the General Assembly.

## OWAA was instructed to

report its activities and recommendations, including the activities of the Delaware Commission for Women, the Delaware Women's Workforce Council, and the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee, to the Governor, Secretary of the DHR, and the General Assembly.





# MISSION



The following report highlights how OWAA, along with the Delaware Commission for Women, the Delaware Women's Workforce Council, and the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee, is fulfilling the tasks and duties set forth by House Bill 4.

OWAA was established as a unit of the DHR with the purpose of promoting the equality and equity of Delaware women in all areas of society. OWAA is responsible for overseeing the state's women's rights work, including leading the ongoing implementation of women's rights legislation, evaluating current women's rights legislation, building support for new legislation, and advising the Governor's Office, the Legislature and the Secretary of the DHR. OWAA relies on, and utilizes, the most up-to-date data, trends and statistics in order to stay informed about the issues affecting women and girls across Delaware. Through such work, OWAA can accurately report on the status of women and girls; advocate for women's rights policies; serve as a clearinghouse, providing information on the status of women to the public, state agencies, the General Assembly, the Judiciary, organizations, businesses, and institutions; and, when necessary, refer complaints and inquiries to the appropriate state departments or agencies as well as community organizations.



OWAA also provides staff support to the Delaware Commission for Women, the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee, and the Delaware Women's Workforce Council. The Delaware Commission for Women is responsible for advising the Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy on strategic planning, project development and programming.

The Delaware Women's Workforce Council seeks to achieve gender equality in every workplace in the state by eliminating the gender-based wage gap; removing the visible and invisible barriers to women's advancement; and ensuring that every person, regardless of gender, has an equal opportunity for advancement in the workplace.

The Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee fosters an understanding of, and an appreciation for, the many contributions Delaware women have made to their homes, communities, the state and nation, and annually recognizes the achievements of remarkable Delaware women through the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame.

OWAA focuses its efforts into several activities including policy, events, research and reports, and public outreach.



# Policy



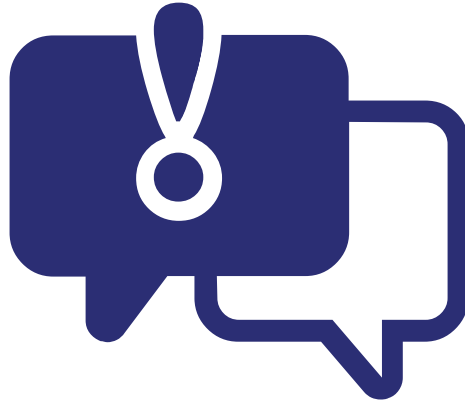
During the 150th General Assembly, OWAA provided research assistance, testified at committee hearings, coordinated advocacy efforts, and met with legislators regarding the following legislative initiatives, all of which were adopted by the General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Carney:

- HB 1 was the final leg of a constitutional amendment to ensure equal rights regardless of sex. (Longhurst)
- HB 246 added the intentional touching of another person with semen to the definition of sexual contact. By doing so, the act of a person intentionally touching another person with semen without consent becomes the crime of unlawful sexual contact third degree. (Longhurst)
- HB 239 prohibits a pelvic, rectal or prostate examination by a health care practitioner or professional on an individual who is anesthetized or unconscious unless the patient provides consent. (Griffith)
- SB 78 requires that the health education programs presented by the Department of Education include instruction on what it means to "consent" in the context of a sexual encounter. (Poore)
- SB 60 clarifies that, in order to be found guilty of prostitution, the person must be 18 years or older. (Poore)
- HB 102 allows a person who is arrested for, or convicted of, any crime, except a violent felony, to file an application for a pardon or expungement or make a motion to vacate judgment if the crime was a direct result of being a victim of human trafficking. (K. Williams)
- SB 169 provides a uniform, comprehensive, clear, fair and constitutionally sound definition of the disclosure of private, sexually explicit images without consent as well as remedies for the harm it causes. (Hansen)



*OWAA also provided technical assistance or committee testimony for several bills that were tabled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The office looks to offer support to those bills if they should be re-introduced in the next legislative session.*





# Parental Leave

The passage of HB 3 with the House Amendment 4 during the 149th General Assembly, guarantees that all full-time state employees, including employees of school districts, who are continuously in the employment of the state for at least one year, are eligible for 12 weeks of paid leave upon the birth or adoption of a child six years of age or younger. From April 1, 2019 until June 30, 2020, 1,100 state employees, including those from the executive branch, non-executive branch, school districts and charter schools participated in the paid parental leave program.

Per HB 3, the DHR is required to submit a report to the Delaware General Assembly and the Governor on the parental leave program annually. OWAA was an integral part of the committee overseeing the development of the paid parental leave report. The report, written by OWAA and with data provided by DHR, tracks key elements of the paid parental leave program during its first year, including how the policy was developed and distributed to agencies, data on projected and actual participation, data on the duration of leave,

how the policy was communicated both internally and externally, and how the policy was integrated into recruitment and retention efforts.

To promote the program to both internal and external audiences, OWAA worked with several divisions, on the following information and outreach activities:

*Posters designed for external audiences that highlighted the program as one of many great benefits state employees enjoy.*

*Posters designed for internal audiences to ensure employees understood and were aware of the benefit.*

*Social media graphics on several channels and platforms.*

*Development and dissemination of a Frequently Asked Questions document.*

*Graphics on the TV screens in the Carvel building*

*A video series highlighting families that utilized the benefit.*

*Testimonials from employees about the benefit.*

*Updates to materials used for onboarding new state employees.*

Results from the OWAA's evaluation survey, which as of June 16, 2020, received responses from more than 300 state employees (30% response rate), demonstrated an overwhelmingly positive impression of the paid leave policy and its impact on employees and their families. Several ideas were shared for how the state could expand its support for state employees with young children

as well as important feedback regarding both the implementation of the policy and the transition to and from parental leave. This feedback was codified in an evaluation report that was distributed to all HR leads and is being carefully considered by OWAA to inform future projects related to improving the experiences of state employees.



## Family Friendly Workplace

During 2020, OWAA continued to work on creating family friendly workplace facilities and policies. Although this work takes many forms, OWAA focused its 2020 efforts on having space set aside for lactation/pumping and the installation of changing tables. OWAA also worked on the DHR policy around lactation/pumping. During this process, OWAA met with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) about lactation spaces in state buildings, conducted research and drafted a memo to OMB on lactation-space best practices, provided feedback to a checklist for lactation room evaluation, and met with the A Better Balance organization for guidance on different state lactation policies.

## COVID-19 Committee

During 2020, OWAA's Director served on DHR's internal COVID-19 committee. The purpose of this committee was to develop health and safety recommendations for DHR and other executive agencies. Over the course of the committee meetings, OWAA regularly provided research on best practices from other states, ways to support working parents and presented workplace flexibility options for consideration.

# EVENTS

Over the past two years, OWAA has led, and participated in, a variety of events in order to engage the public, share knowledge and resources, and celebrate the achievements of Delaware women. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, some previously planned in-person events for 2020 were canceled, but OWAA pivoted quickly to ensure many more were transformed into virtual events.



## Celebrating the Equal Rights Amendment

In January 2019, OWAA co-sponsored an event celebrating the Equal Rights Amendment and recognizing the women of the 126th General Assembly. The event was hosted by House Majority Leader Valerie Longhurst with special guests Governor John Carney, women's historian Dr. Marie Laberge, Senator Stephanie Hansen and Senator Karen Peterson. During the event, Dr. Marie Laberge spoke about the historical importance of the Equal Rights Amendment.

## National Girls and Women in Sports Day

A highlight of the 2019 and 2020 calendar of events, was an OWAA co-hosted event in honor of National Girls and Women in Sports Day. The day was devoted to recognizing the progress of girls and women in sports, and the benefits that sports and fitness activities can bring to the lives of girls and women. OWAA brought together female athletes from all over the state (representing each school district) for a proclamation event with the Governor's office.



## Equal Pay Day

In March 2019, OWAA participated in a press conference for Equal Pay Day held in Legislative Hall to highlight the wage gap in Delaware. OWAA's director spoke about the latest state-level data and promoted the upcoming salary negotiation workshops being hosted by the office. Unfortunately, the press conference for Equal Pay Day 2020 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a substitute, OWAA utilized social media to raise awareness of the wage gap.



## Legislator Speed Meeting

In March 2019, the office hosted a “Legislator Speed Meeting” and invited all Delaware legislators to meet with a variety of Delaware women’s organizations.

Each organization had a few minutes with each legislator, providing an opportunity to share their mission and introduce themselves. In September 2019, OWAA hosted a non-partisan training titled, Nonprofit Advocacy, Lobbying, and Election Year Activities: Federal and State Laws. The purpose of the training was to educate women’s groups about what they can and cannot do in terms of advocacy if they are operating as a 501(c)(3) organization.



## Salary Negotiation Workshops

The Salary Negotiation Workshops, conducted in 2019 and 2020, helped participants gain the skills and confidence to successfully negotiate salary and benefits packages. The 2019 workshops included four in-person sessions that took place statewide and had 150 total participants. In 2020, due to COVID-19, the in-person workshops scheduled for April were delayed and then turned into virtual events hosted in October. The new virtual format allowed OWAA to expand the number of workshop participants, resulting in 300 attendees. As a result of the program’s success, OWAA is planning to offer additional virtual workshops in the future.

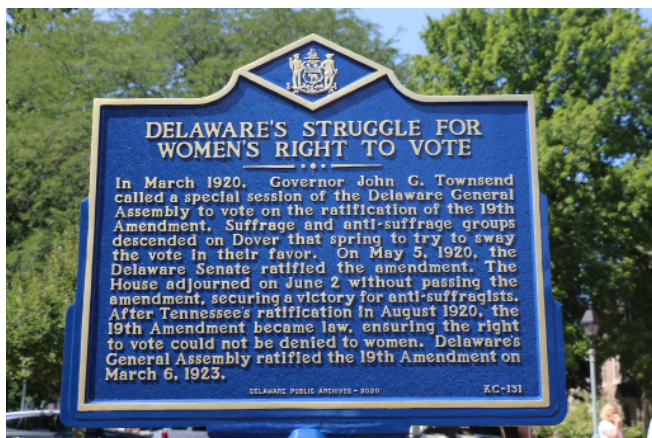
Finally, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, OWAA held a Delaware Women & COVID-19 Town Hall, a virtual event that included Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester, Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long, Secretary of Labor Cerron Cade and OWAA Director Melanie Ross Levin. At the event, which has been viewed over 4,000 times to date, panelists discussed how the pandemic was affecting Delaware women and shared what services were available for assistance.

# OWAA representatives were also featured speakers at the following in-person and virtual events.

- Biden Institute Women's History Month Event (2019, 2020)
- American Association of University Women Annual Meeting (2019)
- American Association of University Women Meeting (2020)
- Delaware Bankers Association Panel on Family Friendly Workplace Policies (2020)
- ChristianaCare Every Woman Matters Event (2020)
- Delaware State Chamber of Commerce Conference (2020)
- Delaware Women Leading Government Event (2020)
- Junior League of Wilmington's Women's Leadership Summit (2019, 2020)
- Lewes Public Library Event (2020)
- Planned Parenthood Rally (2019)
- RBG Vigil (2020)
- Stop the Bans Rally (2019)
- University of Delaware Women's Studies Convocation (Keynote Speaker, 2019)
- University of Delaware MPA Program (2019)
- Wilmington COVID-19 Community Mobilization Group (2020)
- Women in Hospitality Conference (2020)
- Women's History Month Art Show at the LaFate Gallery (2019)
- Women's March (2019, 2020)



In addition to hosting public events and other speaking engagements, OWAA participated in several networking events to build relationships with community partners and increase public awareness of the office. Examples of networking events include the following:



- Delaware Hispanic Commission Conference (2019)
- Great Dames Powerful Conversation: How Men Can Be Strong Allies (2019)
- Forum of Executive Women (2020)
- Historical Marker Suffrage Celebration (2020)
- Millennial Summit Conference (2019, 2020)
- National Association of Women's Commissions Annual Conference (2019, 2020 canceled due to COVID-19)
- The New Castle County Chamber of Commerce Women's Leadership Conference (2019)
- Pride Festival (2019, 2020-canceled due to COVID-19)
- Rotary Club of Wilmington Networking Luncheon (2020)
- Social Media Conference (2019, 2020)
- Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission Meeting in Washington D.C. (2019)



# Research and Reports

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Over the past two years, OWAA has conducted extensive research and created numerous fact sheets, memos and reports on the status of women in Delaware including a memo for the Governor's office on state responses to COVID-19 and the impact on low income populations and the Delaware Equal Pay Fact Sheet (2019, 2020).

One of OWAA's largest research undertakings was the Delaware Women's Voices Survey, which was conducted from October 31, 2019 through January 31, 2020 with support from the Delaware Commission for Women, Delaware Women's Workforce Council and several community partner organizations. The survey was designed to learn more about the concerns of Delaware women and provide the women of the First State with a mechanism for sharing their perspectives on the most pressing issues affecting their communities and their own well-being. Responses from the 801 Delaware women who participated in the survey are helping to guide OWAA perspectives and programs moving forward and also serve as a resource to help nonprofit, community, philanthropic and government entities develop and strengthen supports that can help women and girls in Delaware. The survey was conducted in partnership with the National Association of Commissions for Women as part of the Voices of Women in America (VoWA) Initiative. To summarize the findings, OWAA produced the Delaware Women's Voices Report.

Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, OWAA became aware of several national reports on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women; however, there was little information about Delaware women specifically. To fill the gap, OWAA published the "Delaware Women and the Impacts of COVID-19" report which outlined the disparities experienced by Delaware women including the overrepresentation of women among essential workers and those experiencing:

***Unemployment due to temporary closures of businesses***

***Health and economic disparities***

***Increases in domestic violence***

***An imbalance of caregiving responsibilities which created difficulties for women to remain in the labor force***

OWAA published the report in July 2020 with plans to complete a follow-up report in March 2021. The report continues to be widely shared and has been featured in an article and video on WBOC-TV 16.

# Other research topics, reports and fact sheets included the following:

- Other states' HR responses during the COVID-19 crisis
- Adolescents and supervision related to school closings
- Responses by other women's organizations to COVID-19
- The Federal CARES Act and its impact on DHR and low-income populations
- Policies for returning to work
- Creating a Talent Compact in Delaware
- Hair discrimination
- Retirement savings gap for women
- The impact of frequent moves on military spouses, particularly those with non-transferable state licenses related to work
- Inclusive LGBTQ state policies
- Minimum wage
- Paid family and medical leave



## DELAWARE PAY EQUITY



Nationally, women of all races earn 81% of all men's median earnings. The wage gap for all #DelawareWomen is narrower; in the First State, women can expect to be paid 84% of men's median earnings. However, we know that this gap isn't the same for ALL women. Women of color face a significantly larger pay gap, as compared to their white female counterparts.

White women in Delaware earn <b>83%</b> of white men's earnings	Black women in Delaware earn <b>69%</b> of white men's earnings	Hispanic women in Delaware earn <b>56%</b> of white men's earnings
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Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2018 5-year estimate

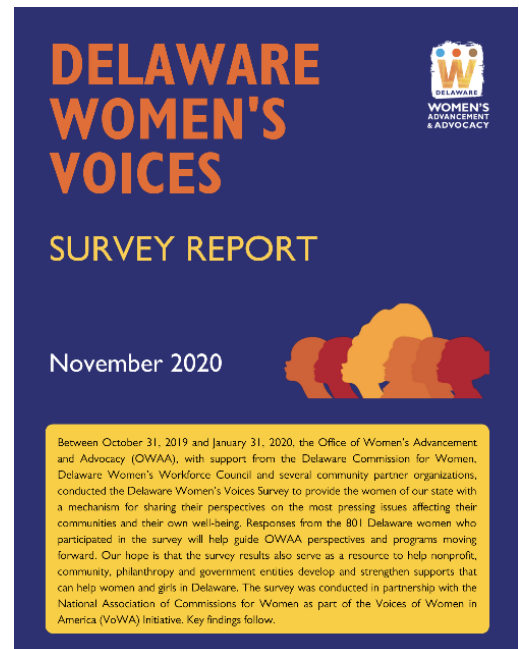
### DELAWARE LAWS COMBATTING THE WAGE GAP

Over the last few years, Delaware has taken meaningful steps to reduce the gender wage gap by:

- ✓ Prohibiting employers from inquiring into an applicant's compensation history (HB 1, 149th General Assembly).
- ✓ Expressly prohibiting employers from taking adverse employment action against an individual based on his or her reproductive health care decisions (HB 316, 148th General Assembly).
- ✓ Banning wage secrecy by prohibiting employers from preventing employees from disclosing his or her wages (HB 314, 148th General Assembly).
- ✓ Expressly prohibiting employers from taking adverse employment action against individual based on his or her reproductive health care decisions (HB 316, 148th General Assembly).
- ✓ Increasing the minimum wage in Delaware to \$9.25 by October 2019 (SB 170, 149th General Assembly).
- ✓ Providing 12 weeks of paid parental leave for eligible state employees, mothers and fathers (HB 3, 149th General Assembly).
- ✓ Requiring that employers receiving contracts from the State shall certify in that contract that, in addition to already mandated fair business practices, the contractor shall ensure that its employees receive equal pay for equal work without regard to sex (HB 3, 148th General Assembly).

### SALARY NEGOTIATION WORKSHOPS

The Office of Women's Advancement & Advocacy (OWAA) and the Delaware Women's Workforce Council, in partnership with American Association of University Women (AAUW) and National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. Delaware Chapter, will host four in-person salary negotiation workshops in the fall of 2020. Once details are confirmed, the workshop registration will be posted at [de.gov/women](https://de.gov/women). Participants in the workshops will gain the skills and confidence they need to successfully negotiate their salary and benefits packages. Until the workshops can take place in-person, please check out this free online resource at <https://salary.aauw.org/salary-negotiation/>.



# Public Outreach

Social media increases public awareness of OWAA and allows the office to quickly and meaningfully engage Delawareans on the issues that are most pressing for women in the First State. Therefore, over the past two years, OWAA has concentrated on growing its social media presence across several channels including email (over 1,600 contacts through Constant Contact), Facebook (more than 1,800 followers), Twitter (476 followers), Instagram (more than 2,000 followers), YouTube, and TikTok.



August 13, 2020  
@ 3:30 PM  
#DEwomenCOVID

**DE Women & COVID TOWN HALL**  
**Facebook Livestream**  
<https://www.facebook.com/DelawareWomen>

Submit any questions to [delawarewomen@delaware.gov](mailto:delawarewomen@delaware.gov)


**Special Guests**

			
Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long	Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester	Secretary of Labor Cerron Cade	OWAA Director Melanie Ross Levin

**Partners**

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority/Incorporated  
Delaware's Chapters  
Zeta Omega  
Epsilon Iota Omega  
Sigma Zeta Omega  
Alpha Alpha Phi Omega  
Peach of Delmarva P.O.T. Interest Group

 The Facebook Live Town Hall on DE Women & COVID was OWAA's most successful social media post to date; the post reached 11,627 people.

Social content included hundreds of graphics, important announcements, legislative updates and uplifting stories about Delaware. Through email, the office sent 37 newsletters, announcements and updates to subscribers. OWAA also created several specific social media campaigns in order to build awareness around particular issues and events.

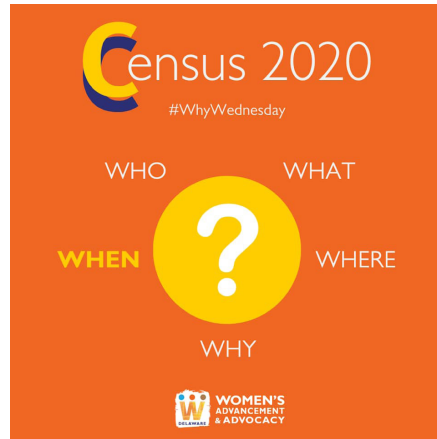


# EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS:

Delaware Women and  
COVID-19



The 2020 Census



21 Day Racial Equity  
Challenge



Delaware Women's Hall of  
Fame



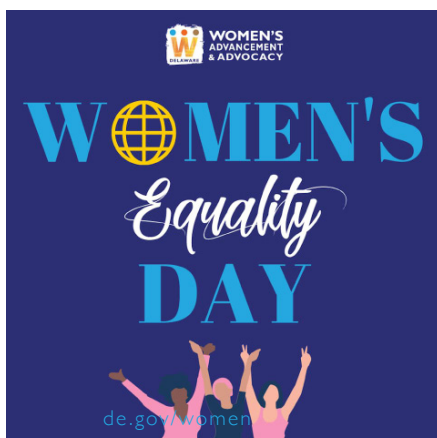
Delaware Women's Voices  
Project



Salary Negotiation  
Workshops



Women's Equality Day



Women's Suffrage Anniversary



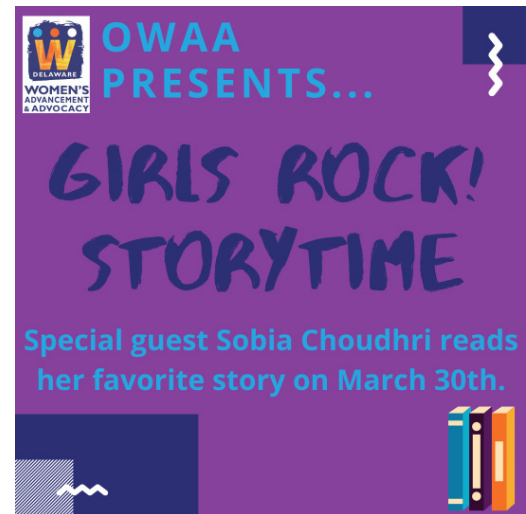
She's On Her Way Event



## OWAA GOES VIRTUAL



Social media continues to be particularly critical during the pandemic. In addition to shifting many in-person events to virtual formats, OWAA utilizes social platforms to connect with the public and partners by providing rich, engaging and supportive content. Two specific programs that emerged were “Girls Rock Story Time” and the “Member Spotlight” series.



“Girls Rock Story Time” was a video series featuring Delaware women reading their favorite empowering books to provide enriching activities for students and parents when schools were closed. Featured readers included Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long; former Miss Delaware's Outstanding Teen Jacqueline “The STEM Queen” Means; OWAA staff; and members of the Delaware Commission for Women, the Delaware Women's Workforce Council and the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee. Collectively, the video series reached more than 6,400 views.

The “Member Spotlight” series educated Delawareans about the work of the various volunteer groups staffed by OWAA, including the Delaware Commission for Women, the Delaware Women's Workforce Council, and the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee. OWAA asked members of these groups about their backgrounds. The answers were transformed into 30-second videos which were viewed more than 600 times.



**WOMEN'S  
ADVANCEMENT  
& ADVOCACY**

DELAWARE WOMEN'S  
COMMISSION

# DELAWARE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

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## 2020

ACTIVITIES DURING THE  
150<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY

# The Delaware Commission for Women

The Delaware Commission for Women is responsible for advising OWAA on strategic planning, project development and programming. Upon its reorganization in 2017, the Commission adopted by-laws and has met quarterly over the past two years. The Commission can have up to nine members, representing all three counties and the City of Wilmington. Members serve for various term lengths and are appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate.



## Members:

### DR. MARIAN PALLEY

Commission Chair  
Professor Emerita, University of Delaware

### SHERESE BREWINGTON-CARR

Commission Vice Chair  
Senior Administrator, DE Department of Labor

### ALISHA WAYMAN BRYSON

Vice President  
Wayman Fire Protection

### KATHERINE CAUDLE

Staff Representative  
AFSCME Council 81

### SOBIA CHOUDHRI, DDS

American Dental Care

### MICHELLE TAYLOR

President & CEO  
United Way of Delaware

### LAURA BURNETT

Retired Teacher

### TWO VACANCIES



## She's On Her Way Event

While the responsibility for planning and hosting the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame was re-assigned to the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee, the Commission for Women continued its recognition of Delaware women by planning and hosting a biennial "She's On Her Way" Award, which recognizes the achievements and community contributions of remarkable young women ages 18-30. A subcommittee was created to oversee the award process, and on March 1, 2019, in partnership with First Lady Tracey Quillen

Carney, the Commission publicly presented the award to four women at a high tea ceremony at Buena Vista.



# MARCH 1

## *She's On Her Way*

AN AWARD FOR YOUNG WOMEN MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN DELAWARE

HOSTED BY THE DELAWARE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN  
& FIRST LADY TRACEY QUILLEN CARNEY

### JOIN US FOR HIGH TEA

BUENA VISTA ESTATE  
NEW CASTLE, DE

11:30 AM



WOMEN'S  
ADVANCEMENT  
& ADVOCACY

# \$25

TO PURCHASE TICKETS:

[de.gov/women](https://de.gov/women)

## The Delaware Women's Coalition

The Delaware Commission for Women created a statewide Women's Coalition to provide nonprofits that serve Delaware women the opportunity to coalesce around mutually supported initiatives. The Women's Coalition currently has 57 members representing organizations such as the Junior League of Wilmington, National Coalition of 100 Black Women-Delaware Chapter, YWCA of Delaware, Fund for Women, United Way of Delaware, DE Coalition Against Domestic Violence, AAUW of Delaware and the Rodel Foundation. Since its inception, the Women's Coalition has met quarterly and discussed various initiatives that the committee could work on collectively. For example, the "speed meeting" event hosted by OWAA was an initiative of the Women's Coalition. Nine Delaware women's organizations and three legislators attended the "speed meeting" event. The coalition also hosted a nonprofit advocacy training on September 9, 2019 with eighteen organizations in attendance. Invited guests from the Morris James law firm and the Alliance for Justice in Washington, DC spoke on effectively advocating and lobbying as a 501 (c)(3).

The Commission participated in the Delaware Women's Voices project by sharing the survey and participating in a training related to the project. Commission members also wrote letters of support to legislators to highlight key bills, including Senate Bill 60 which clarified that in order for a person to be found guilty of prostitution the person must be 18 years or older; Senate Bill 78 which required health education programs in Delaware schools to teach about consent, and House Bill 102 which allows for victims of human trafficking to have their record expunged.



NCBW  
100

AAUW  
of Delaware



FundforWomen  
AT THE DELAWARE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**  
Delaware

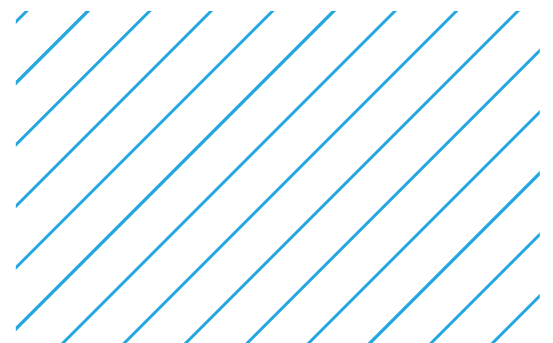


JUNIOR LEAGUE OF  
**WILMINGTON, DE**



United Way of Delaware

**Rodel**  
A GREAT EDUCATION  
CHANGES EVERYTHING





**WOMEN'S  
ADVANCEMENT  
& ADVOCACY**

DELAWARE WOMEN'S  
COMMISSION

# DELAWARE WOMEN'S WORKFORCE COUNCIL

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## 2020

ACTIVITIES DURING THE  
150<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY

# The Delaware Women's Workforce Council

## Advocating for Delaware women.

The Delaware Women's Workforce Council is charged with eliminating the gender-based wage gap, removing the visible and invisible barriers to women's advancement, and ensuring that every person regardless of gender has an opportunity for advancement in the workplace. The Council was formally established in December 2017, and has since created by-laws, undergone a strategic planning process, and met quarterly to discuss workforce issues and actions the Council could take. The council can have up to 11 members, representing all three counties and the city of Wilmington, who serve for various term lengths, and are appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House, and President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

## Council Members

### LOUISE CUMMINGS-LEWIS, ESQ.\*

Council Chair

Founder of Ballard's Reading Buddies

### ROXANNE FERGUSON

Executive Director

Middletown Area Chamber of Commerce

### DR. MARIE LABERGE

Assistance Professor

University of Delaware

### LINDA BARNETT

President (Wilmington Chapter)

AAUW Delaware

### YVONNE GORDON, MBA, EdD.,\*

Owner/Operator

Orangetheory Fitness Pike Creek

### CHRISTOPHER WATERS

Consultant, Impact Strategies

### KIMBERLY REINAGEL-NIETUBCZ

Council Vice Chair

Strategic Policy Analytic, University of Delaware

### KATEY EVANS

President of Sales & Marketing

Evans Farms

### PASTOR RITA PAIGE

Star Hill AME Church

### FOUR VACANCIES

\* = term ended in October 2020



With support from the Delaware Women's Workforce Council, OWAA hosted "Work Smart" sessions in 2019 and 2020 to educate women entering, or already in, the workforce on salary negotiation strategies, including how to articulate personal value and benchmarking a target salary and benefits. The workshops also informed attendees about the wage gap and how it impacts women's careers. To conduct the workshops, OWAA contracted with the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and partnered with several organizations including AAUW of Delaware, National Coalition of 100 Black Women Delaware Chapter, The Biden Institute and YWCA Delaware.



*The Delaware Women's Workforce Council also supported the Delaware Women's Voices project and assisted with a job search tips video series whereby a member of the Council interviewed a job search expert.*



# Hall of Fame

OF DELAWARE WOMEN



## The Delaware Women Hall of Fame Committee



Established in 1981, the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee recognizes and acknowledges the achievements of remarkable Delaware women and fosters an understanding of, and an appreciation for, the many contributions all women across the First State make in their homes, communities and across the state and nation. The committee reviews applications and inducts new members into the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame annually. The Committee comprises seven members, representing all three counties and the city of Wilmington. Committee members serve for various term lengths, and are appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House, and President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

## Council Members

### KAY KEENAN

Hall of Fame Chair  
President  
Growth Consulting Inc.

### DONNA MASLEY

Owner  
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### TWO VACANCIES



# Hall of Fame

## OF DELAWARE WOMEN

On October 17, 2019, the Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy and the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee, hosted the 28th annual Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony to celebrate six phenomenal inductees: Blanche Williams Stubbs, Marie Swajeski, Judge Jan Jurden, Maria Matos, Tania Vitcuskey Culley, and Drew Fennell. The event was held at Dover Downs with more than 300 guests who enjoyed a night of music, dinner, celebratory speeches, and the presentation of this prestigious award.



The committee typically begins the nomination and selection process in the months immediately following the event. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty it brought, the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee decided to select eight individuals to be inducted into the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame over the course of the next two years (2020 and 2021). For the 2020 cycle, the Committee selected two Delaware suffragists, the late Margaret Burton White Houston and the late Mary Seward Phillips Eskridge, and partnered with the Delaware Women's Suffrage Centennial Committee to induct these nominees at a suffrage celebration event that was postponed until 2021. For the 2021 cycle, the Committee chose six exceptional women to be inducted into the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame in the fall of 2021. The 2021 inductees include Fayette M. Blake, Marianne Blackburn "Mimi" Drew, Ann Jaffe, The Honorable Valerie Longhurst, The Honorable Jennifer Cohan, and The Honorable Stephanie T. Bolden.

The committee has also been working on creating opportunities beyond the annual event to honor the Hall of Fame inductees. Some of these activities include improving the physical displays in the state office buildings, updating the information about all inductees and making it more publicly available, and exploring other avenues to inform the public about these incredible women.





# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 151<sup>ST</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY



**2020**

## Activities & Recommendations Report



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

### THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS

encompass a wide range of issues that impact women. These initiatives are intentionally broad, as OWAA seeks to help all Delaware women and girls achieve their potential at every stage of life. Developing recommendations, both legislative and regulatory, is an ongoing process. These recommendations are not meant to be an exhaustive list of every policy that might help women in the First State, nor are they meant to be a detailed blueprint for execution. In addition, they do not consider budget and resource requirements.

These recommendations do build on steps Delaware has already taken, and OWAA looks forward to working with the Administration and the General Assembly to further develop policies that improve equity and equality for women in the coming legislative session.

If you have suggestions, please contact OWAA Director, Melanie Ross Levin, at  
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### Recommendation: Prioritize Supports for Women During Covid-19 Recovery Efforts

According to OWAA's report on Delaware women and COVID-19, Delaware women have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. They are over-represented in front-line occupations and among those affected by temporary business closures. The analysis also shows that Delaware women, especially Black and Hispanic women, are more likely to be in poverty while at the same time being key family breadwinners. Add in increased caregiving needs due to child care and school closings, and Delaware women are being hit especially hard. These unfortunate circumstances necessitate that the needs of Delaware women be thoroughly addressed in the continued COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts. A first step would be to include gender data in any ongoing

data dashboards, and, given the impact on women of color, that data should be cross tabulated with race. Furthermore, any stimulus and recovery packages should have an eye on how they are impacting the most vulnerable – including Delaware women and especially Black and Hispanic women. The good news is that the State has created innovative programs such as the Rapid Workforce Training and Redeployment Training Initiative to assist Delaware workers and their families who have lost jobs and income due to the COVID-19 crisis. Given that women have been disproportionately impacted by job loss over the course of the pandemic, it is essential that such programs are accessible to Delaware women.

## Recommendation: Provide Paid Family and Medical Leave Program and Guarantee Paid Sick Days to all Delaware Workers

Without more permanent access to 1) paid family and medical leave and 2) paid sick days that cover all working people – across the government, nonprofit and private sectors – Delawareans face greater financial instability; pose an increased health risk to themselves, their families and others; and put additional strain on the public health and safety infrastructure's ability to contain COVID-19 and future public health crises.

Individuals need to stay home when they are sick or when they have no other way to care for children. However, they often go to work anyway because they cannot risk the loss of income. Although the State of Delaware took a huge step in providing paid parental leave to state workers and many state employees have access to paid sick time, there are still thousands of

Delaware workers that do not have access to any paid family and medical leave or paid sick days. Emergency federal measures helped provide a temporary fix, but those provisions are scheduled to sunset on Dec. 31, 2020. Plus, exemptions excluded as many as 334,551 workers in Delaware. Furthermore, 40 percent of Delaware's private sector workforce, or 131,128 Delaware workers cannot earn a single paid sick day for reasons unrelated to COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> The State, in response to the COVID-19 emergency, exercised its discretion starting on March 12, 2020 to provide that State employees may be paid State Paid Emergency Leave at 100% of the employee's regular earnings under specific circumstances related to COVID-19 for up to two weeks.

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## Recommendation: Increase Investments in Child Care

Child care is critical to Delaware's economy and the well-being of its citizens because it helps parents go to work and supports children's healthy development. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has further strained an already overburdened child care system in Delaware, leaving many parents without enough options for care. During the pandemic, child care providers' expenses have gone up 40%, while enrollment has gone down 50%. Providers are also facing staffing shortages due to low pay and no benefits in most cases. National predictions indicate that Delaware could permanently lose one-third of its providers due to COVID-19.<sup>2</sup> With fewer child care choices more women, who are the more often the primary child care provider in the home, will be forced out of the workforce in order to care for their children.

State funding not only helps providers keep their doors open, but it keeps costs down for families and supports providers across all settings including public schools,

family child care, as well as community and center-based providers. Fortunately, Governor Carney has invested \$135 million in enhanced reimbursement for child care during the COVID-19 pandemic, a vital step in preserving the child care industry. However, further investment in child care is required to ensure that Delaware's workforce, especially women, remains strong.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

### Recommendation: Strengthening Workplace Harassment Protections

COVID-19 has left many workers more vulnerable to workplace harassment. This increased vulnerability is especially true for workers in low-wage jobs, many of whom are on the frontlines of the crisis. Delaware's law could be further strengthened in the following ways to help protect all workers, but especially those in low wage jobs, from workplace harassment:

1.) Extend the statute of limitations for filing workplace discrimination claims. Providing for a three-year statute of limitations (SOL) for filing a claim is vital to ensuring that workers can access justice and hold their employers accountable. Under Delaware law, employees only have 300 days to bring a claim which is inadequate for those processing the trauma of harassment and/or discrimination. In addition, low-wage workers often need the time to find a new job to put food on the

table before being able to consider bringing a claim. Several states provide a longer SOL under state law: three years in New York and California, years in Oregon and Kentucky, and six years in Ohio.

2.) Extend workplace discrimination protections to Independent Contractors and employers with fewer than four employees. Some workers most vulnerable to workplace harassment fall within these categories—like domestic workers and gig workers. Workers should be protected from discrimination and harassment no matter the size of their employer or how they are classified.<sup>3</sup>

### Recommendation: Create a Comprehensive Plan to Increase Wages

In Delaware, the current minimum wage is \$9.25 per hour, equating to just \$19,240 per year for someone working 40 hours per week for the full year. Yet, for a family of three, perhaps a mother with two children, the federal poverty level stands at \$21,720. While Delaware saw minimum wage increases in 2018 and 2019 and is scheduled to see increases in 2020 and 2021, such increases are dependent on legislation. Even with these increases, the current minimum wage still lags far behind the costs of living and there is no mechanism in place to insure that wages rise with the cost of living. Furthermore, these increases don't apply to the

hourly minimum wage for tipped employees, which is just \$2.23 and hasn't seen an increase in over 30 years. Delaware also permits a subminimum wage for workers with a disability per the Fair Labor Standards Act.

To help women and, indeed, all low-wage workers earn a living wage, OWAA recommends Delaware consider steps taken by other states as well as a living-wage model created by MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Additionally, eight states, including nearby Maryland and New Jersey, have adopted \$15 an hour as their goal and passed laws or ballot initiatives implementing yearly increases to achieve



that goal by 2025 or 2026. There are also seven states that do not permit a subminimum wage for either tipped employees or those with a disability. Instead of relying on legislation, several other states automatically increase their minimum wage based on the cost of living.

The MIT model uses a market-based approach that draws upon geographically specific expenditure data related to a family's likely minimum food, childcare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and other basic necessities to calculate the wage that would be needed to cover such costs. In Delaware, the living wage determined by the MIT model for one adult

without any children is \$12.60 per hour.<sup>4</sup> For a single parent, the wage needed to cover basic necessities more than doubles to \$26.31.<sup>5</sup> This data makes it clear that Delaware must take meaningful steps toward a more livable wage for all its workers, including tipped employees and workers with disabilities.

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## Recommendation: Expand Family-Friendly Practices

Delaware increased its competitive edge as a desirable place to work with the addition of paid parental leave for state employees. Delaware employers can build on this momentum by further expanding family-friendly practices. For example, state buildings can be updated to include private, more easily accessible non-bathroom spaces for pumping breastmilk. The state can also become more family-friendly by increasing its outreach

and education efforts to ensure that employees and managers understand employees' rights and employers' obligations regarding transitioning to and from paid parental leave, how to accommodate workers with caregiving responsibilities, and lactation accommodations.

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## Recommendation: Help Delawareans Save for Retirement with Delaware Earns Program

Millions of hardworking Americans do not have access to a retirement plan and roughly half of American workers do not participate in one. Many low-income workers do not have the funds to meet basic needs and therefore saving for an emergency or a future income for years down the road, simply isn't feasible. However, Delaware can help eliminate such barriers to savings with the creation of a state-sponsored retirement plan, paid for by employees and overseen by the state. One proven option is a secure choice program, which is

used in other states. These state-facilitated, universally available retirement savings plans provide a convenient way for middle-class workers to save for retirement, particularly workers who lack access to employer-sponsored plans and for small businesses that are unable to provide such a benefit.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

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### Recommendation: Support Victims of Domestic Violence with the Creation of Advocate Privilege

Victims of domestic violence need the security of knowing information shared with advocates will remain confidential; otherwise, victims may be less likely to come forward. Delaware should ensure that advocates for victims of domestic violence cannot disclose any communication from the victim to the advocate without express written consent of the victim. At least 40 states have legislation pertaining to advocate confidentiality

including New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland. <sup>6</sup>

### Recommendation: Help Pregnant Students Stay in School by Excusing Pregnancy-related Absences and Absences to Care for Children

Addressing the negative impact of unexcused school absences on pregnant or parenting teens can help keep these students on the path to success. Delaware can ensure that schools are providing the basic protections required under Title IX, and expand on those protections, by requiring schools to excuse absences for

parents to bond with a newborn child or care for an ill child. In addition, Delaware should make clear that a student who is breastfeeding must be permitted to be excused from class to express breast milk or breastfeed.

### Recommendation: Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Hair

Women of color are often disproportionately affected by grooming policies. The state can be proactive in reducing discrimination and protecting the rights of Delawareans by broadening the definition of race to include traits such as hair texture or protective hairstyles for women. Such changes can be made while

still ensuring safety standards for Delaware workers.

## Recommendation: Boost Wages of Low-income Workers by Making EITC Refundable

Too often Delaware families live paycheck to paycheck, without extra income to save for larger expenditures, and women, especially women of color, are disproportionately represented in low-wage work. However, refunds from the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) can provide much needed supplemental income and lead to improvements in health and education outcomes, boost future social security earnings, and move families out of poverty.<sup>7</sup> The EITC is currently refundable at the Federal level as well as in 23 states including Maryland and New Jersey.<sup>8</sup> Making the EITC

refundable for Delaware state taxes can not only alleviate poverty and support low-income working families but it encourages work and lessens reliance on social welfare programs.



*OWAA welcomes input and collaboration as it continues its work. Suggestions may be directed to OWAA Director, Melanie Ross Levin, at [melanie.rosslevin@delaware.gov](mailto:melanie.rosslevin@delaware.gov) or 302-577-8790. Visit us @DelawareWomen on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok. [De.gov/women](https://de.gov/women)*

## ACTIVITIES SECTION ENDNOTES

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- 8 National Women's Law Center . "The Working Families Tax Relief Act: Making The Tax Code Better Support Women and Families." (2019). Retrieved from: <https://nwlc-ci49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Working-Families-Tax-Relief-Act-Factsheet.pdf>





**WOMEN'S  
ADVANCEMENT  
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